

Office of Congressman Charles W. Dent
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Congressman Dent pushes proposals to clean up tribal gambling industry

WASHINGTON, D.C. — In a proposed amendment and in a hearing before the House Resources Committee this week, U.S. Rep. Charlie Dent (PA-15) has renewed his fight to close campaign finance loopholes and against outrageous land grabs by tribal casinos.

Specifically, Congressman Dent offered an amendment to a campaign finance reform bill focused on so-called “527s” that would have also made changes to the way Indian tribes, particularly those with gambling interests, may contribute to political campaigns.

Congressman Dent’s amendment would have made federal election law more consistent without infringing on the basic rights of Indian tribes to participate in campaign politics.

“The problem isn’t Indian tribes themselves; the problem is casino interests and others that might not have the best interests of the tribe at heart demanding that these tribes contribute large amounts of money to political campaigns,” Congressman Dent said. “I believe we should amend campaign finance law to keep individual tribes’ aggregate annual political contributions in check with other individuals.”

Congressman Dent voted for the “527” reform bill, but unfortunately no amendments were taken. “I will continue to push for these changes through every legal and legislative avenue that becomes available,” Congressman Dent said.

Related to the issue of Indian tribes, Congressman Dent also spoke at a hearing of the House Resources Committee, chaired by U.S. Rep. Richard Pombo (R-CA) to discuss the ongoing problem of “reservation shopping” by Indian tribes looking to build casinos.

Congressman Dent and Chairman Pombo have each proposed bills to address the problem of Indian tribes seeking land not contiguous to their reservations to build casinos.

“Indian tribes should retain the right of pursuing legitimate land claims, but we must address this abuse of the law and the legal system,” Congressman Dent said.

Dent introduced H.R. 3431, a bill to amend the Indian Gaming Regulatory Act, on July 26, 2005. Specifically, the bill would:

- Prevent Indian tribes from making land claims on property that is not contiguous to their own reservation with the intent of introducing gambling there;
- Give a state Legislature the power, as a state governor already has, to overturn a U.S. Department of Interior decision to award a land grant in trust to an Indian tribe

Congressman Dent proposed the bill because an Oklahoma-based tribe made a contentious land claim against more than 25 homeowners and businesses in Forks Township, Northampton County, with plans to build a casino.

The Forks Township land claim has since been rejected in federal court, although an appeal may be imminent. Congressman Dent seeks to protect landowners from costly lawsuits and possible clouds over their deeds.

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